The World of Letters as Others See It

Women Novels of Protest.

WOMEN novelists of the 1890s were fairly well represented in England by such dissimilar writers as Sarah Grand, whose "Heavenly Twins" proved a "best seller"; Mrs. Oliphant, who wrote popular innocuous tales; Mrs. Humphry Ward, whose best work appeared before the new century began, and Charlotte Yonge, the perpetrator of "The Daisy Chain" and other discursive stories. In these the modern touch was conferred by allowing the most courageous of the woman characters to ride bicycles in knickerbockers. Yet even in these conservative novels the characteristics animating the "woman movement" were perceptible. Mr. Hugh Walpole, discussing the period, observes that " 'equality of the sexes' made a novel sell like hot cakes." Both as a principle and as a purpose it loomed large in popular fiction of the period—no less in America than in England, where such novelists as Margaret Deland, Beatrice Harraden and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps Ward may be said to have given it impetus. There was an undercurrent of self-assertion, an attempt to tear away reactionary tradition. Taken as a whole, novels of women in the 90s form a literature of protest.—*From the New York Sun.*

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The Difference in Atmosphere.

IN other words, there is a difference of atmosphere. It is not merely in the type and the lettering; it is a difference in the way the news is treated and the kind of words that are used. In America we love such words as "gunmen" and "joy ride" and "death cell"; in England they prefer "person of doubtful character" and "motor traveling at excessive speed" and "corridor No. 6." If a milk wagon collides in the street with a coal cart we write that a "life wagon" has struck a "death cart." We call a murderer a "thug" or a "gunman" or a "yeggman." In England they simply call him "the accused, who is a grocer's assistant in Houndsditch." That designation would knock any decent murder story to pieces.—*From "The British and American Press." By Stephen Leacock in Harper's Magazine.*

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Authors, Artists and the Boulevard.

THE history of the Grands Boulevards in Paris has never yet been written. They live on the pages of Balzac, of Flaubert, of Cladel, of Mendes; they live in the creations of Gavarni and Daumier and Constantin Guys. In writing of Guys, Baudelaire says: "Some people have just compared the works of Gavarni and of Daumier with 'La Comedie Humaine,' as being commentaries on his novels. Balzac himself, I am convinced, would not have hesitated in adopting this idea, which is just in the sense that the genius of the artistic painter of morals is that of a mixed genius; that is to say, that there enters into it a good deal of the literary imagination." Always, the boulevards have an odd and an extraordinary fascination for those who love Paris most at the hour when dusk comes on, stealthy as the silent feet of night, more exciting than any hour in the day; the hour of *aperitifs* and the hours that follow them till long after midnight.—*From The Freeman.*

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Dickens's Tales of Lemaitre.

DICKENS talked of Frederic Lemaitre; he is upward of 60 years old now; but he has always lived a wretched life, a low, poor fellow; yet he will surprise the actors continually by the new points he will make. He will come in at rehearsal, go about the stage in an abject, wretched manner, with clothes torn and soiled as he has just emerged from his vulgar, vicious haunts, and without giving sign or glimmer of his power. Presently he says to the prompter, who always has a tallow candle burning on his box, "Give me your candle"; then he will blow it out and with the snuff make a cross upon his book. "What are you going to do, Frederic?" the actors say. "I don't know yet; you'll see by and by," he says, and day after day perhaps will pass until one night when he will suddenly flash upon them some wonderful point. They, the actors, watching him, try to hold themselves prepared, and if he gives them the least hint will mold their parts to fit his. Sometimes he will ask for a chair. "What will you do with it, Frederic?" He does not reply, but night after night the chair is placed there until he makes his point. He often comes hungry to the theater, and the manager must give him a dinner and pay for it before he will go on.—*From "With Dickens in America." By M. A. De Wolfe Howe in Harper's Magazine.*

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Verlaine and Rimbaud.

PAUL VERLAINE, who has just been the subject of a lecture in Manchester, was a perfect specimen of the Bohemian, Latin Quarter poet. But he pales before his contemporary and friend the symbolist Arthur Rimbaud. They lived together for a time on Campden Hill; until one midsummer evening Verlaine returned after buying their supper. He had bought fish so far from fresh that the street boys commented on it as he carried it home. Rimbaud, who was writing one of his delicate little poems at the time, also commented when it appeared. Verlaine thereupon flung it in his face and took the next boat for the Continent. Almost as soon as he landed he wired apologies, and with them—an unwonted touch of forethought—money to bring Rimbaud over to be reconciled. The reconciliation took place in the presence of Verlaine's mother at a Brussels hotel. It took the form of Verlaine firing one revolver shot into his friend's wrist and another harmlessly into the floor. As a result they parted, Verlaine to Mons prison, Rimbaud to begin a life of travel, which he continued until his death nearly twenty years later. At this time Rimbaud was only 18, but he had already written most of the poetry which still influences modern French authors. He never wrote a line after he was 19.—*From the Manchester Guardian.*

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Rimbaud's Roving Life.

RIMBAUD was not a slave, like Verlaine, to the charms of absinthe, but he had an almost equally imperious master in the desire to travel. He went to Germany as a schoolmaster,, and left it to walk over the St. Gothard to Italy. He went to Java as a Dutch soldier and deserted, returning to Europe (after hiding for weeks in the jungle) as an interpreter on an English ship. He made his peace with the Dutch authorities by persuading a number of young men to enlist in the colonial service, from which he himself had deserted. He went to Vienna, and was there robbed by a cabman and expelled by the police for begging. He went to Scandinavia as the accountant of an itinerant circus, but got back to France by telling a pitiful tale to the French Consul. He joined the Carlist army when he grew tired of dock laboring in Marseilles, and then deserted promptly. He represented a Hamburg firm in Alexandria, and he acted as a quarryman in Cyprus. Later he found a longish anchorage at Harrar, where he varied miscellaneous trading with gun running. His last return to France was made necessary by an illness in the course of which his leg had to be amputated. But the glamour of the East held him so remorselessly that he got himself taken to Marseilles, where he died after writing to a shipping company for a passage to Egypt.—*From the Manchester Guardian.*

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Monte Cristo in the Films.

THERE is a really excellent serial film of "Monte Cristo" now being shown at various kinemas (writes a correspondent). Its French producers have evidently spent much money in providing correct costumes and the furniture of the period, while the part of Edmond Dantes is taken by "the Henry Irving of Paris." In short, the thing is done handsomely, but a delicious anachronism which has slipped in is worthy of notice. A newspaper paragraph relating to the villain Morcerf is displayed on the screen, and part of an adjoining paragraph is shown with it. The subject of this paragraph is, of all subjects, radium. — *From the Manchester Guardian.*

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Maggie Tulliver and the Lady of the Camellias.

AND as we wander through the portrait gallery of George Eliot's women characters, and linger in contemplation before their familiar faces, there is none which, with all its human waywardness and passion, more truly reflects this searching for the truth "that teaches inwards" than the face of dark eyed Maggie Tulliver, rising hauntingly from the background of the Red Deeps. To attempt to draw an analogy between this pure and high souled heroine of fiction and the frail "Daughter of Joy," the pallid Lady of the Camellias, the creation of an artist with whom the austere English moralist appears to have little in common, might seem incongruous, but that these two tragic heroines are united by one indissoluble bond: the spirit of renunciation, that utter negation of self in which woman has ever sought the fulfillment of her highest destiny, than which, despite the clamor of the would-be feminist, no surer means is to be found for the regeneration of man.—*From the Nineteenth Century.*

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America to Foreign Eyes.

TO Ibsen, America was the button molder's pot, where the Scandinavian peasant was melted up with Tom, Dick and Harry into some one else, a second tryout for human material. To Zangwill, borrowing the idea from Ibsen, America was "The Melting Pot" where Jews were melted down. To Mary Antin, America was the Promised Land of the Jews, though to do her justice her famous book was written before the Bolshevik revolution and the entry of America into a European war. To Maxim Gorky, America was the country of gleaming teeth and mirthless smiles. To the present writer, America was the living West as compared with Russia, the living East—the country of humanitarianism and all that I have called the "Way of Martha." To Mr. H. G. Wells, America represents the future of civilization; to Mr. Arnold Bennett, the future of upholstery. —*From "America as Material for Literature." By Stephen Graham in the Contemporary Review.*

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"The Mikado" and the Japanese.

"I LEARN from a friend, who had it direct from the King, that the Japs made the objection to 'The Mikado' and that it was at their instance it was suppressed. A delicate and polite action on the part of a guest toward a host. The rights in the piece do not revert to me for three years; by that time we shall probably be at war with Japan about India, and they will offer me a high price to permit it to be played. . . . I hear the King is very angry about it, as he was supposed to have done it off his own bat. They are going to do 'Iolanthe' at the Savoy, and I hope it will be done better than the others. Mrs. Carte was at the Lord Chamberlain's weeping for two hours on end because they would not let me do 'The Mikado.' King Edward's saving sense of humor should surely have secured him against such allegations as this."—*From "The W. S. Gilbert of His Own Letters" in the Cornhill.*

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Gilbert and the Garrick.

"I'VE just been elected to the Garrick Club, for which I was blackballed thirty-seven years ago —through a case of mistaken identity, for I was quite unknown then, and the committee thought they were pilling another man. When they discovered their mistake they asked me to put myself up again, but it occurred to me that as the mistake was theirs, it was theirs to rectify it. Moreover, I am not one of those who turn the second cheek to the smiter. So matters have remained until the other day, when the committee did me the honor of selecting me for immediate election 'on account of my public distinction' (!). As Heaven had signified its displeasure at the action of the committee of thirty-seven years ago by sweeping them off the face of the earth, and as I had no quarrel with the present committee, who are all my very good friends, I accepted the honor they had proposed to confer on me." —*From "The W. S. Gilbert of His Own Letters" in the Cornhill.*

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Gilbert as Limerick Writer.

IT is amusing to know that W. S. Gilbert failed to obtain even an honorable mention in a once familiar trade, limerick competition; specimens in a letter seem to reflect upon the critical ability of the judges.

"When I asked a young girl of Portrush,
'What book do you read?' she said, 'Hush!
I have happened to chance
On a novel from France,
And I hope it will cause me to blush.' "

"There was a far famed individdle
Who had a bad pain in his middle,
But a gentle emetic
With Lamplough's Pyretic
Soon made him as fit as a fiddle."

His absolute mastery of rime was better shown in another limerick made in a moment at dinner, when some rash guest instanced Decima as a difficult name with which to deal.

"There was a young lady, Miss Decima,
Whose conduct was voted quite pessima;
But she mended at last,
On the eve of the fast
Of the Sunday called Septuagesima."
—*From "The W. S. Gilbert of His Own Letters" in the Cornhill.*

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Another French View of Blasco Ibanez.

THE future novelist at first wanted to become a mariner, but found mathematics too difficult. Then he determined to become a lawyer. He was an idle and unruly student. He appeared at the University of Valencia only on the days when disorder was in prospect. At the age of 16 he ran away to Madrid, took a room in a den and became the secretary of a novelist who had previously been celebrated, but who had fallen upon evil days, one D. Manuel Fernandez y Gonzales. The old writer in full payment for services took the young man to dine on a beefsteak and potatoes in a humble restaurant, among cowmen, day laborers and working girls. Then he dictated to his secretary till the dawn.—*From Les Annales.*

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The Passing of Puritanism.

THE old literary world of America shivered at Boston and would have felt much warmer at Chelsea. The purity of language, the asceticism of thought, the severity of judgment of the great New England writers belong to the Old World and its bitterness rather than to the New World with its providential blessings. Europe and America are entirely unalike in atmosphere. New England related America to Europe simply as an extension. But Europe is a mutual mortification society and America is a land of boundless spaces, overflowing with prosperity, mellow, kind. Not a land of discipline and the "place to which God has called you," but a place of holiday. America, compared with Europe, is an afternoon off—a genuine human romp. Such a story as that of "The Scarlet Letter" is a mistake in location now. It ought to have been somewhere in Southern Scotland, rather than in America.

Puritanism is ceasing to be characteristic of America. New England is losing her hegemony, and the leadership, as might be expected, is going to the Center. Boston has a great past; Chicago has a great future. American self-consciousness beings to center in the Middle West, and it is not Puritan, not even prudish—where courtship is done in cars and they "bob" their stockings and forgive Arbuckle and are nearer to the Mormons.—*From "America as Material for Literature." By Stephen Graham in the Contemporary Review.*

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French Histories of the Great War.

THE great work of the historians of to-day is not merely to search for and to gather documents, but also to find among all the documents they have the few which they can rely on from which to write a trustworthy history of the war. This delicate and difficult work has already been tried with much success by Victor Giraud in his "Histoire de la Grande Guerre." It is still methodically and scrupulously pursued in every part of the monumental "Histoire de la Guerre," prepared by the most prominent historians under the direction of M. Hanotaux. The great care of each and all of these writers is to achieve a true and scientific history in opposition to the well known and skeptical definition of Anatole France: "History is not science. It is an art. One succeeds there only by using his imagination."—*From the North American Review.*

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Maupassant's Love Sentiment.

TENDER, delicate, too, and sweet is the love sentiment of the writer of *Fort comme la Mort* and *Notre Cœur;* it is natural also in that it is not perverted or perverse; but tenderness, delicacy and naturalness do not alter its essentially sensual character. It is love, that sweet thing, the most sweet that life can offer, the flower of youth; it is also youth itself with its illusion perpetually renewed; but in this sweetness it consumes itself away entirely; it produces nothing, is no wise transformed or glorified. He who loves places the center of his existence, the true reason of his being, in his love which is pleasure, a pleasure which has no equal; so overwhelming is the force of pleasure, the pleasure of love, that it imposes itself on the soul as an absolute necessity, replaces all other ideal interest and all other source of comfort and joy, evades all moral law and dominates all.—*From "Maupassant." By Benedetto Grace in the London Mercury.*

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Secret Literary Dissipations.

THE most reputable of my own private stimulants form an oddly assorted trio. They are Stendhal's "Le Chartreuse de Parme," Mr. Wells's "The History of Mr. Polly" and "The Note Books of Samuel Butler." Each of these has so far proved infallible when I am suffering from a surfeit of literature. The worst attack of acidie, the veritable devil that walketh in the noonday, gives way before them. Are they all great books? I have often declared that they are, but for the life of me I cannot be sure. Sometimes I doubt whether a great book could be so precisely fittted to my constitution as these are. Indeed, there are moments when my conscience pricks me. I am almost afraid to take them up without some assurance that my case is really urgent. I may be like a man taking nips from the domestic brandy which is for medicinal purposes only.—*By John Middleton Murray in the London Times.*

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With Crawford in Venice.

MARION CRAWFORD, the author of it, turned up soon after I got there, a magnificent giant, who lived up to his magnificence. Still, he was one of the expatriated who, though they pass their lives in Italy and talk the language perfectly, really know nothing of the country and the Italians. How many of those sad cases have I seen! I had met Crawford once or twice before. On one occasion he dined at a little club, and among the other guests were Sir F—— M—— and Sir C—— D——, and Harold Frederic, who was of the same type, said that after a few drinks he could not tell which was himself and which was any of the others, for they were like four twins. I lunched with Crawford at his hotel and he introduced me to his gondolier, who knew everything about Venice and would take you to exactly the spot where the Cook or the illustrious Ruskin or some other bore had made their drawings, and he brought prints and books from under the gondola seat to prove it. Crawford approved of him. I hated him.—*From "Adventures of an Illustrator." By Joseph Pennell in the Century.*